Four

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THE SIXTIES



A MAGAZINE
OF POETRY AND OPINION

Poetry either leaps into the unknown, or it is nothing.

—Octavio Paz.

Revolution in art lies not in the will to destroy but in the revelation of what already is destroyed.

—Harold Rosenberg.

Roots and wings—but let the wings grow roots and the roots fly!

—Juan Ramon Jiménez.

THE SIXTIES

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Enrique González Martínez

TUÉRCELE EL CUELLO AL CISNE

Tuércele el cuello al cisne de engañoso plumaje
que da su nota blanca al azul de la fuente;
él pasea su gracia no más, pero no siente
el alma de las cosas ni la voz del paisaje.

Huye de toda forma y de todo lenguaje
que no vayan acordes con el ritmo latente
de la vida profunda . . . y adora intensamente
la vida, y que la vida comprenda tu homenaje.

Mira al sapiente buho cómo tiende las alas
desde el Olimpo, deja el regazo de Palas
y posa en acquel árbol el vuelo taciturno . . .

Él no tiene la gracia del cisne, mas su inquieta
pupila, que se clava en la sombra, interpreta
el misterioso libro del silencio nocturno.

Enrique González Martínez

TAKE THIS SWAN

Take this swan with puffy plumage, and wring his neck,
Who gives his white touch to the blue of the fountain pool;
He displays his elegance only, but does not understand
The soul of creatures, or the voice of the silent fields.

Keep away from all forms, and all styles of speaking
That do not change quickly to follow the secret rhythms
Of the life that is deepest . . . and adore life
Intensely, and make life grasp your devotion.

See the intelligent owl, how he lifts his wings
Abandoning the Greek mountain, he leaves the shelter of
Pallas,
And finishes his silent moody flight on that tree . . .

He does not have the elegance of the swan, but his troubled
Eye, which pierces into the darkness, reads
The mysterious book of the silences of night.

From Enrique Gonzdlez Martínez: Antologia Poetica, *Espasa—Calpe, Argentina, Buenos Aires,* 1944. *Translated by Robert Bly.*

Antonio Machado

'¡ TENUE RUMOR . . .'

¡Tenue rumor de túnicas que pasan
sobre la infértil tierra! . . .
¡y lágrimas sonoras
de las campanas viejas!

Las ascuas mortecinas
del horizonte humean . . .
Blancos fantasmas lares
van encendiendo estrellas.

—Abre el balcón. La hora
de una ilusión se acerca . . .
La tarde se ha dormido
y las campanas sueñan.

ANTONIO MACHADO

'FAINT SOUNDS OF LONG ROBES'

Faint sounds of long robes drawn
Over the rocky earth!
And the noisy sobs
Of the ancient church-bells!

The fiery coals of the horizon
Are dying, and smoking . . .
Snowy ghosts of the household gods
Go about lighting the stars.

—Open the balcony. The hour
Of the imagination is approaching . . .
The afternoon has fallen asleep
And the church-bells are dreaming.

From Soledades; Obras Completas,
Editorial Plenitud, Madrid, 1957.
Translated by Robert Bly.

ANTONIO MACHADO

'SORIA FRÍA . . .'

¡Soria fría, *Soria pura,*
cabeza de Extremadura,
con su castillo guerrero
arruinado, sobre el Duero;
con sus murallas roídas
y sus casas denegridas!

¡Muerta ciudad de señores
soldados o cazadores;
de portales con escudos
de cien linajes hidalgos,
y de famélicos galgos,
de galgos flacos y agudos,
que pululan
por las sórdidas callejas,
y a la medianoche ululan,
cuando graznan las cornejas!

¡Soria fría! La campana
de la Audiencia de la una.
Soria, ciudad castellana,
¡tan bella! bajo la luna.

COLD SORIA! PURE SORIA

Cold Soria! Pure Soria,
headland of Estremadura,
with the warrior castle
in ruin beside the Duero;
with crumbling walls
and blackened houses!

Dead city of knights,
of soldiers or hunters;
of portals with shields
of a hundred noble lines,
of lean pointed hounds,
of ravenous greyhounds
swarming
through squalid alleys
and howling at midnight
when crows caw.

Cold Soria! The courthouse bell
strokes one.
Soria, Castilian city
so beautiful under the moon!

From Campos de Castilla; Obras Completas, *translated by Willis Barnstone.*

Antonio Machado

'TAL VEZ . . .'

Tal vez la mano, en sueños,
del sembrador de estrellas,
hizo sonar la música olvidada

como una nota de la lira inmensa,
y la ola humilde a nuestros labios vino
de unas pocas palabras verdaderas.

'EL MONTE AZUL . . .'

El monte azul, el río, las erectas
varas cobrizas de los finos álamos,
y el blanco del almendro el la colina,
¡ oh nieve en flor y mariposa en árbol!
Con el aroma del habar, el viento
corre en la alegre soledad del campo.

'WHILE DREAMING, PERHAPS'

While dreaming, perhaps, the hand
Of the man who broadcasts the stars like grain
Made the lost music start once more

Like the note from a huge harp,
And the frail wave came to our lips
In the form of one or two words that had some truth.

From Galerias; Obras Completas,
translated by Charles Reynolds.

'THE BLUE MOUNTAIN, THE RIVER, THE ERECT'

The blue mountain, the river, the erect
coppery staffs of slender aspens,
and the white of the almond tree on the hill.
O flowering snow and butterfly on the tree!
With the aroma of the bean plants, the wind
runs in the joyful solitude of the fields!

From Nuevas Canciones;
Obras Completas,
translated by Willis Barnstone.

'DESDE EL UMBRAL . . .'

Desde el umbral de un sueño me llamaron . . .
Era la buena voz, la voz querida.

—Dime: ¿vendrás conmigo a ver el alma? . . .
Llegó a mi corazon una caricia.

—Contigo siempre . . . Y avancé en mi sueño
por una larga, escueta galería,
sintiendo el roce de la veste pura
y el palpitar suave de la mano amiga.

'EN EL MAR . . .'

En el mar de la mujer
pocos naufragan de noche;
muchos, al amanecer.

'FROM THE DOORSILL . . .'

From the doorsill of a dream they called my name . . .
It was the good voice, the voice I loved so much.

—Listen: Will you go with me to visit the soul? . . .
A soft stroke reached up to my heart.

—With you always . . . And in my dream I walked
Down a long and solitary corridor,
Aware of the touching of the pure robe
And the soft beating of blood in the hand that loved me.

From Galerias; Obras Completas,
translated by Robert Bly.

'IN THE SEA OF WOMEN . . .'

In the sea of women
few shipwreck at night;
many at dawnlight.

From De Un Cancionero Apocrifo;
Obras Completas,
translated by Willis Barnstone.

Antonio Machado

CANCIONES

1

Junto a la sierra florida,
bulle el ancho mar.
El panal de mis abejas
tiene granitos de sal.

2

Junto al agua negra.
Olor de mar y jazmines.
Noche malagueña.

3

La primavera ha venido.
Nadie sabe cómo ha sido.

4

La primavera ha venido.
¡ Aleluyas blancas
de las zarzales floridos !

5

¡ Luna llena, luna llena,
tan oronda, tan redonda
en esta noche serena
de marzo, panal de luz
que labran blancas abejas !

SONGS

1

The huge sea drives
Against the flowering mountain.
The comb of my honeybees
Holds tiny grains of salt.

2

Not far from the black water.
Odor of the sea and of jasmine flowers.
Night of Malaga.

3

Spring has arrived.
No one knows what happened.

4

The spring has arrived.
Snow-white hallelujahs
From the flowering blackberry bushes!

5

Full moon, full moon,
So great, so round
In this tranquil night
Of March, honeycomb of light
That the white bees have made!

From Nuevas Canciones;
Obras Completas,
translated by Robert Bly.

A NOTE ON ANTONIO MACHADO

POETRY IS RELATED TO SENSITIVITY; almost every poet agrees to that, but poets in this country tend to be sensitive to ideas and intellectual formulations, and to words such as 'distinction', 'natural', 'time' and 'mortality', and the Spanish poets are more sensitive to words such as 'owls', 'sea', 'night', 'darkness', or rather, they are actually sensitive to owls, darkness, and the sea.

In the intellectual world of Marianne Moore, which is the world of all American poetry today, we try to bring real owls into the imaginary orchard of the poem, but Machado does not do that. He brings the poem to the owl.

In a poem such as 'Cold Soria', translated here, Machado does not try to bring the real town of Soria into the poem, but rather carries the poem all the way to Soria, and then makes the poem transparent, so that the poem simply becomes Soria and the moonlight.

In the same way, writing of a beanfield in the 'Blue Mountain', on page 9, instead of using the beanfield as some sort of argument in a poem for an intellectual position, he simply brings the poem to the beanfield and leaves it there. This is one of the greatnesses of Machado—which leads most Spaniards today to consider him a greater poet than Lorca.

Antonio Machado was born in Seville in 1875. From 1907 to 1938 he made his living teaching French in small secondary schools in Soria and Segovia, in northern Spain. Machado, when first in Soria, in 1907, was married. His wife died three years after the marriage and he said later: 'Her memory is with me always.' He lived the rest of his life in solitude, in the small towns in the mountains, taking long walks for hours each day in the city and hills. As soon as the Civil War began, he placed himself on the Republican side, and died of illness in France in 1939 shortly after retreating over the border ahead of Franco's army. Last year, in Spain, in a gesture of some political importance, a gathering of poets and intellectuals was held to honor Machado. They travelled from all over Spain to Segovia. The room where Machado had lived for thirty years was much too small to hold the people who had come in his

honor, and it was necessary to hold the meeting in the open air. His poem 'A Young Spain', beginning: 'It was a time of lies, of infamy' was read in his memory.

The fine Spanish poet, Pedro Salinas, who lived for years in the United States as an exile, and taught at Johns Hopkins, had known Machado in Spain. When Salinas died in 1942, Eleanor Turnbull gathered from his former students notes of Salinas' remarks on Machado and others. Of Machado he said: 'In shape he was like a great mountain. In his life he was noble and simple. His poetry was a colloquy with his inner man; he said, "kill your words and listen to your soul".' Jiménez in his short essay on Machado said that Machado spent hours meditating on death, and 'when I met him early in the morning, I had the impression that he had just risen from the grave'. In 1917, when Machado's early poems called *Soledades* were reprinted, he himself wrote something about his own poetry. We have translated his note.

'The poems of this first book, which was published in January of 1903, were written between 1899 and 1902. For a number of years Ruben Darío, fought against with mockery by the critics then in fashion, had been the idol of a small minority. I too admired the author of *Worldly Stories*, the great master of form and of feeling, who later revealed to us the depth of his soul in his *Poems of Living and of Hope*. But I presumed—and notice that I do not boast of results, but only of intentions—to follow a quite distinct road. My thought was that the substance of poetry does not lie in the sound value of the word, nor in its color, nor in the poetic line, nor in a complex of sensations, but in the pulse of the depth of the spirit; and this deep pulse is what the soul contributes, if it contributes anything, or what it says, if it says anything, with a voice appropriate to itself, in a courageous answer to the touch of the world. And I thought also that a man ought to overtake by surprise some of the phrases of his inward conversations with himself, distinguishing the living voice from the dead echoes; that he ought, also, looking inward, to try to see the vigorous images, the things of feeling which all men possess. My book was not the systematic realization of this proposal, but such were my artistic intentions at that time.'

Federico García Lorca

MEMENTO

Cuando yo me muera,
enterradme con mi guitarra
bajo la arena.

Cuando yo me muera
entre los naranjos
y la hierbabuena.

Cuando yo me muera,
enterradme, si queréis,
en una veleta.

¡ Cuando yo me muera!

Federico García Lorca

MEMORIAL

When it is my turn to die,
Inter me with my guitar
Beneath the sand.

When it is my turn to die
In the orange trees
And the mint-leaves.

When it is my turn to die,
Inter me, if you want to,
In a weathervane.

When it is my turn to die!

From Poema del Cante Jondo, Obras Completas, IV, *Losada, Buenos Aires,* 1952.
Translated by Robert Bly.

TARDE

¿Estaba mi Lucía con
los pies en el arroyo?

Tres álamos inmensos
y una estrella.

El silencio mordido
por las ranas, semeja
una gasa pintada
con lunaritos verdes.

En el río,
un árbol seco,
ha florecido en círculos
concéntricos.

Y he soñado sobre las aguas
a la morenita de Granada.

AFTERNOON

Was my Lucia standing
with her feet in the river?

Three immense poplars
And one star.

The silence, nibbled
By the frogs, resembles
A painted gauze
With small green blemishes.

In the river,
A dry tree
Has shed blossoms,
Widening in circles.

Sounding over the waters
To the tawny girls of Granada.

From Canciones, Obras Completas, II.
Translated by James Wright.

Federico García Lorca

MALAGUENA

La muerte
entra y sale
de la taberna.

Pasan caballos negros
y gente siniestra
por los hondos caminos
de la guitarra.

Y hay un olor a sal
y a sangre de hembra
en los nardos febriles
de la marina.

La muerte entra y sale
y sale y entra
la muerte
de la taberna.

SONG OF MÁLAGA

Death
Is entering and leaving
The tavern.

Black horses and dark
People are riding
Over the deep roads
Of the guitar.

There is an odor of salt
And the blood of women
In the warm spice plants
Near the sea.

Death
Is entering and leaving
And leaving and entering
Death
In the tavern.

From Poema del Canto Jondo,
Obras Completas, IV.
Translated by J. A. Cottonwood.

CANCIÓN DE JINETE

Córdoba.
Lejana y sola.

Jaca negra, luna grande,
y aceitunas en mi alforja.
Aunque sepa los caminos
yo nunca llegaré a Córdoba.

Por el llano, por el viento,
jaca negra, luna roja.
La muerta me está mirando
desde las torres de Córdoba.

¡ Ay qué camino tan largo!
¡ Ay me jaca valerosa!
¡ Ay que la muerte me espera,
antes de llegar a Córdoba!

Córdoba.
Lejana y sola.

SONG OF THE RIDER

Córdoba.
Distant and alone.

Black pony, full moon,
And olives inside my saddlebag.
Though I know the roads well,
Yet I will never arrive at Córdoba.

Through the low plains, through the wind,
Black pony, red moon.
Death is looking down at me
From the towers of Córdoba.

What a long road this is!
What a brave horse I have!
How death is looking for me
Before the arrival at Córdoba!

Córdoba.
Distant and alone.

From Canciones, Obras Completas, II.
Translated by J. A. Cottonwood.

AGOSTO . . .

Agosto,
contraponientes
de melocotón y azúcar,
y el sol dentro de la tarde,
como el hueso en una fruta.

La panocha guarda intacta,
su risa amarillo y dura.

Agosto.
Los niños comen
pan moreno y rica luna.

AUGUST . . .

August.
The opposing
Of peach and sugar,
And the sun inside of the afternoon
Like the stone in the fruit.

The ear of corn keeps
Its laughter intact, yellow and firm.

August.
The little boys eat
Brown bread and rich moon.

From Canciones, Obras Completas, II.
Translated by James Wright.

Federico García Lorca

VUELTA DE PASEO

Asesinado por el cielo,
entre las formas que van hacia la sierpe
y las formas que buscan el cristal,
dejaré crecer mis cabellos.

Con el árbol de muñones que no canta
y el niño con el blanco rostro de huevo.

Con los animalitos de cabeza rota
y el agua harapienta de los pies secos.

Con todo lo que tiene cansancio sordomudo
y mariposa ahogada en el tintero.

Tropezando con mi rostro distinto de cada día
¡ Asesinado por el cielo !

HOME FROM A WALK

(In New York)

Assassinated by the sky,
Among the forms which are moving toward the serpent,
And the forms which are searching for the crystal,
I'll grow long hair.

With the tree of amputated limbs which does not sing,
And the boy child with the white face of the egg.

With all the tiny animals who have gone insane,
And the ragged water which walks on its dry feet.

With all those who have a deaf and dumb fatigue,
And the butterfly drowned in the inkpot.

Hulking along with my face that changes with each day,
Assassinated by the sky!

From Poeta en Nueva York,
Obras Completas, VII.
Translated by Robert Bly.

ON CURRENT POETRY IN AMERICA

When we read the poems of Jiménez or Machado or Lorca, we realize that our poetry in English for the last two hundred years suffers from continual overstatement. Ordinarily the poet in this country or in England comes to the poem with a quite humble emotion, a fairly reasonable emotion, one perhaps not even too original—and then suddenly begins to rear a vast edifice, using grandiloquent meters, highly involved rhymes, caesuras, stanzas developed by centuries of passion. The effect is comical at times, yet no one criticizes the disproportion between the gigantic machinery and the small unassuming emotion it carries. A poet might have a quirk of feeling about the Great Bear, for example, and then write eight packed highly rhymed stanzas in faultless iambic, a poem as long as 'Lycidas', all on this sliver of feeling, and no one notices the disproportion—quite the contrary: the poet is praised for skill in form, and fine handling of meter, etc. In the same review, the critic might in fact praise Longinus' idea that the one great ability of the poet is knowing what is appropriate, or praise Kenneth Burke's statement that a poem is an exercise in propriety.

This is a strange situation, and it shows the present disharmony or contradiction between form and content in its most astounding form, and shows also the presence of a kind of blindness—namely, we are no longer sensitive to form, and to what form *says*. Form speaks, just as the inner content speaks, but what if they don't say the same thing? Often in America, the poem grunts, and the form speaks in highly polished Cambridge English. Or the poem sails over the horizon as a huge fluffy swan, and when we look beneath, we see a small scrawny chicken.

Poets writing in what we have called the new style or the new imagination are not driven to this rhetoric and overstatement. When Jiménez has a short feeling, he writes a short poem. Trakl comes to the poem with an extremely violent emotion, one much stronger than ours, a dark and gigantic passion, and then, instead of overstating, he writes a quite brief poem. In this way each word is strengthened and nourished by the emotion and becomes heavy.

Machado's poem, 'While Dreaming, Perhaps', on page 9, describes the exultation the Spanish poets felt when they realized they were writing after four hundred years some poetry that was new and fresh, but it is also a defense of the short poem. Lorca's poems in this issue also show his study of the brief poem, and his devotion to it.

—ROBERT BLY.

Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum

The accusations Enrique González Martínez makes in his poem on page 3 are true of American poetry now. We have inherited a poetry of puffy elegance and seedy rhetoric. A degenerate form of the poetry of the swan is the dominant poetry in this country. In his fine essay, 'French Silence and American Poetry' in his new book *Tradition of the New*, Harold Rosenberg has some interesting remarks on such rhetoric. He suggests that the French poet must constantly work to shut off the noise of rhetoric so that he can achieve some silence around himself. 'All the French Alchemists are after the same thing, the actuality which is always new—and which will only come forth out of the silencing of the existing rhetoric.' Here is the noise of rhetoric; three of these American swans are influential poets and editors.

The wounds of the polaroid dogwood bleed
In the tree of space. The angel in the galaxy
Of these blossoms is confused outward, but his tears
Travel only to the center. Which is everywhere.

John Ciardi, Poetry Editor of Saturday Review.

From the thin slats of the Venetian blinds
The sun has plucked a sudden metaphor:
A harp of light, reflected in the floor,
Disorients the chair and desk and door.

Howard Moss, Poetry Editor of The New Yorker.

It is in low silence, always, that one errs,
Hearing the trees outside distinctly, where
The high wind, generally, obscures and blurs

The most discrete intentions, and defers
The private mumming that harms beyond repair.

John Hollander, Poetry Editor of Partisan Review.

Innumerable infinite songs
Great suffering of the atomic
    in verse
Which may or not be
    controlled
  By a consciousness
  Of which you the
ripples of the waves
  are a part
    That's Buddhism—,
    That's Universal Mind

Jack Kerouac, author of 'Spontaneous Prose', passage from 132*nd chorus of* Mexico City Blues, *Grove Press,* 1959.

So commerce with the Infinite was regain'd:
    For upward grew Man's ken
And trod with founded footsteps the grievous fen
Where other life festering and prone remain'd.

Lascelles Abercrombie, from 'Ceremonial Ode Intended for a University' in The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse.

THE WORK OF W. S. MERWIN

READERS AND CRITICS have had a hard time describing the poetry of W. S. Merwin. His poetry has been described as belonging to the school of elegance with that of Richard Wilbur and Anthony Hecht; or as good bread-and-potatoes poetry after the mad vagaries of Eliot and Pound—magazines like *Harper's* and *Atlantic*, particularly, have taken this stand. The recent reviewer in *Partisan* simply gave it all up, and said that Merwin was from another world, and relied on time to make it all clear later.

Mr. Merwin's best poems in fact show a strange kind of genius; still, the most striking characteristic of his work seems to me to be wastage of words. In one of his poems the words follow each other like ants in one of their vast battles in Africa, as lemmings in their migrations into the sea, or as minor characters in some huge and sprawling novel of the 19th century. When we look closely at his poems, in fact, we see a use of language which we associate with a novel: instead of diving to the core of the emotion, as in poetry, the language moves horizontally, many circumlocutions are used, descriptions are repeated several times in different words, the rhythm is hesitating in mood as if the poet were appealing to our common sense.

This description of his poetry is no better than the earlier ones. Yet it suggests an important issue which I would like to pursue through Mr. Merwin's work, namely the presence in poetry of a prose language. In this sense, Mr. Merwin is an almost perfect representative of the American poet today, who stands midway between being a prose writer and a poet. The American poet stands in 'some mid-kingdom, dark', swayed by the vast landslides of prose on all sides, and yet dimly aware of intuitions more profound and full of poetry than any for several hundred years.

I will try to explore this mid-kingdom. First I must show how it exists in Mr. Merwin's own poetry. Much

of his work is certainly on a lower level of intensity than true poetry.

Poetry's is the highest intensity, for the whole point of poetry is that it is as intense an expression as possible. If we look at all writing being done today, we notice a sort of descending ladder of intensity and meaning. At the top is poetry, like that of Lorca, Alberti, early Eliot, some Lowell and Roethke, Neruda, etc., then fiction, like that of Salinger, Hemingway, Bellow, then essay and newspaper prose, as in critical and scientific journals or any newspaper or sociological book, then a level of writing empty even of information, which would have to be described as *nothing*. Everything now is sinking toward the bottom, and writers like Gold and Mailer, for instance, are so far from poetry that they can, paradoxically, no longer write fiction.

One of the confusing things about Mr. Merwin is that he has writing on all of these levels. Let us look at some on the bottom level first. His first book, called *A Mask for Janus*, was published as a Yale Younger Series Book in 1952. If we take some stanzas from that book, we are sometimes surprised:

> The covenant we could but seize
> Fractionally by the ear
> And dreamed it substance, that the eyes
> Might follow—and its motions were
>
> Hands that toy about a door
> In dreams and melt where they caress,
> Not displacing the wind they wear—
> Brought us to this final place.

Or

> Laughter is not celebration
> And may not coax with renewal
> The closed heads bending
> In their garden at heal of evening.

These lines have no emotional meaning, no intellectual

meaning, no political meaning, no religious meaning, no dramatic meaning, nothing. All they do is give us a sort of dreamy and elevated feeling; however, the feeling is like that from poor prose or nonsense verse, a feeling empty of content. These passages are not merely the result of exercises, since they continue through the book and into his second book, *The Dancing Bears*, published by Yale University Press in 1954. Here is a passage from 'Canso' in *The Dancing Bears*. The poem seems to be written to an American woman.

> For you, by all the faiths in which we figure,
> Are undeceivable: we are not ourselves
> And I but a shadow in your superstition
> Unless love be an imagination
> Framing the singular metaphor of coherence
> In the dying riot of random generation,
> Unless it be the passion of an order
> Informs you so to this innocent
> Authority, this peculiar knowledge.

If we compare this to Robert Creeley's lines, for instance:

> I was neat about it, she later wrote
> to a relative in Spokane.
> She spoke in accents low
> as she told me.

or Louis Simpson's line:

> Noli me tangere was not her sign,

we see that even in a single line or a few lines of these two poets both the poet and the woman are real, but in the poem of Merwin's, we have no sense of the reality of either the poet or the woman, and the feeling is so vague that we cannot tell: perhaps it is not written to a woman at all but to Aphrodite or the Virgin Mary.

This parade of nothingness is frightening, and gives us a sense of emptiness like that of hell. The stanzas are not 'poetic' either, but the very opposite of poetry—a

writing with empty language. Yet this is a sort of thing that Auden has been praising for years in his inane introductions to the Yale books. I am trying to show that Merwin's work has one representative fault of American poetry today—namely, that it lacks poetry. There are often no odors, or sounds, or senses, and the work is often barren of personality in the way newspaper prose is.

I have started by giving examples of the poorest kind of writing, where there is an absence of the language of either good fiction or good essay prose.

In poems much better than these, Mr. Merwin uses a somewhat different language. Here is a passage from a poem called 'December: Of Aphrodite' in his second book again, *The Dancing Bears.*

Hercules, crazed
By that jealous goddess, murdered his children;
Samson, from a woman's lap, woke blinded,
Turning a mill in Gaza; Adam, our father,
Eating from his wife's hand, fell from the garden.

Here the language is richer; it is still prose, but better prose. If we were to compare these lines with actual poetry, we might choose Milton's one line on the same subject:

Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves.

We are surprised, on reading Milton's line, to find that we immediately feel a kind of joy: a number of the senses press in on us at once, and the rhythm is strong and implies decision, and the sudden variety of sound gives us also a kind of joy. The Merwin lines are unusually flat in language and sound.

Here is a passage from Mr. Merwin's most recent book, *Green with Beasts*, published by Knopf in 1956. It is the opening lines of a poem called 'In the Heart of Europe'.

Farmers hereabouts, for generations now
Have owned their own places; their names
Covered the country before the families
Of the former kings were heard of, and having
Survived masters and serfdom, describe still the same spot.

If we consider the flat sound, the pale rhythm, the absence of the senses, we realize this is simply prose, appearing as if by forgetfulness in a poem. We also realize something further: these are words *intended* for the written page. We understand that prose is something that is *meant* to be written down. Prose does not have to have the feeling of the living voice in it: it addresses itself to the eye, which is satisfied merely if the words make sense. We realize that no person *speaking* these sentiments would ever use the word 'former' before kings—that is strictly a prose word in this context. So also is 'having survived' and above all the use of the word 'describe': 'their names . . . . describe the same spot'. This is in fact bookish, as is even 'hereabouts' even though 'hereabouts' *looks* very 'spoken'. I think that as a matter of voice rhythm, most voices would say 'around here' or something of that sort.

I conclude, to my own surprise, that Mr. Merwin is trying to write poetry with a language never intended for poetry at all. The language he uses was conceived for strictly descriptive—that is, prose—purposes.

Mr. Lipton has some very interesting remarks on this subject in the Spring (April 15) 1956 Book Issue of *The Nation*. There he comments on the possibility of there being two languages: the old spoken language and the newer, written language. The newer language was a language developed for written communication. It could be called the 'written language' or 'prose language' or 'the second language', since it was never in existence at all until the invention of the printing press—not in fact until several hundred years after that.

In England a need developed for descriptive prose, which the wild language of Shakespeare or the language of Euphues could not satisfy. The language was developed by naturalists, scholars, lawyers and scientists, among others. Darwin's papers, the papers of a hundred private scientists experimenting in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries all helped to develop this language. At the present time all scientific, sociological, government and newspaper prose of a thousand subjects are written in this language. Living under the deluge of such written language as we do every day, it is not surprising that a poet should be affected by

it, and use it for his work, as Mr. Merwin does. It is my belief that this is the language in which most poets today, in fact, are attempting to write poetry. Other poets beside Mr. Merwin use this language—we notice that Robert Lowell's new book is written in the same language. One reason Mr. Lowell's book received so much praise is that, being written in prose language, it can be easily understood by people who are not used to reading poetry. Much of the work of men such as Allen Ginsberg is also written in this language, and almost all the poetry one sees in the *Kenyon Review* and *Partisan Review*.

This is certainly a strange situation, if true, and casts some light on the scene of total confusion that American poetry presents today. The historical background of the present situation is conjectural but interesting. One might speculate that beginning in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the written language has been used by more and more poets for the language of poetry, and this increase still continues, though accompanied from time to time with desperate efforts in the other direction, like Wordsworth's efforts in the early nineteenth century to go back to 'common speech'. Whitman, and after him Yeats and Eliot abruptly break away from this written language, but the American poets after them have not been that radical. They have for the most part gone on using the written language, and these poets, sensing that poetry is becoming each year more prosy, more and more try to overcome the anxiety by fusing with the language elements indisputably 'poetic'—namely rhymes, strict meters, elaborate forms such as sestinas, etc. The heavy emergence of form in the poets of the nineteen fifties, as in *New Poets of England and America*, is not, therefore, the sudden perversion that older poets and critics, reviewing it, imagine it to be, but the direct and natural result of the work of these older poets, and of all their poetry in a prose language. Heavy form today is the result of writing poetry in a prose language, and in these new days of two separate languages for men, we might in fact note a natural law of poetry—that a poetry which adopts written language will sooner or later be driven to adopt heavy, usually archaic, form. At the same time, it will be driven in a second direction to adopt four

letter words and 'shocking subjects', as we see in Ginsberg's poetry and the whole Grove Press school. These are both futile attempts to reintroduce intensity, while keeping the written language. Many of the weird phenomena of the last twenty years, including Yvor Winters' school, which has been so destructive, are more easily understood if we keep in mind that the most generally recommended language for poetry has been prose.

II

The use of written language also seems to require the use of a certain subject matter. Mr. Merwin's poems are mainly about things, not himself. We remember his Whale, Blue Cockerel, Horses, Dogs, etc. Whatever else it may be poetry certainly is the expression of an inner feeling. Written language is wonderful for describing objects, as in a novel, or a scientific paper. Our machinery of poetry for the last thirty years really equips the young poet only to write about objects and things. Consequently many poems are written about things. For one 'Groundhog', which Eberhart somehow succeeds in relating to his weird but daring mind, a hundred thousand fail, and lie all over the ground like lumps of cold clay. The situation reminds me of a question I once overheard in a poetry workshop: Have you written your poem about the Tristan myth yet? Questions like that make a man's blood run cold. The question is horrible. It shows no feeling for poetry whatever. Poetry does not lodge in Greek myths or cockerels or whales but it grows more intense as it comes nearer to the poet—that is why Merwin's later poems on the mining country of Pennsylvania are more intense poetry than his earlier poems—they are nearer his background, his family and his childhood. I do not mean to imply that Merwin is a workshop poet, or could have asked such a question as the one remembered above, but the whole thought is brought to mind by the discussion of *things*—we are surprised at the number of *set* poems we find in Mr. Merwin's work—the Quest of the Golden Fleece, Zodiac, Proteus, Sisyphus, Aphrodite, the Bones of Palinurus, Burning the Dead Cat, the Flood, etc. When one thinks of the problems of poetry,

one realizes it is really mad to write poems about such subjects—why those? Of all the infinite subjects for poetry, why should these chestnuts be hauled out of the fire again and again? The reason is of course that they seem poetic. It isn't the words that seem poetic now, as they did in Victorian times, but certain *things*—Orpheus's descent, the Labyrinth, Palinurus, etc., yet actually these subjects are not as poetic as a hundred illusory thoughts a poet has every day on the street and forgets. Vallejo's poetry exhibits this truth again and again. Still, one reason the middle-class reviewers, as in *Harper's* or *Atlantic*, felt so much at home with Merwin's poetry, is that it is about things, not about himself.

The poetry of things which we have had so much of in the last thirty years has tended to keep poetry in America out of the main stream of modern poetry. Rilke wrote of things, but only after fifteen years of writing more personal and inward poems than any poet has ever written in the English language. Our poets move in exactly the opposite direction. Equipped by teachers and language to write only of things, they write about things before they develop any true inwardness. The result is usually a flat and stale poetry. We have endless poems on railway stations, urinals, aunts, Beat subway cars and dead cats. The absorption in a poetry of things is shared by almost all the poets in America today, regardless of 'school'. It is the quality that the poetry of Lowell and of Merwin has in common with that of the Beats, as well as with the poetry of the Black Mountain group, who after Charles Olson and William Carlos Williams emphasize 'objects' and 'objectivism'. Many of the Black Mountain group aim at presenting an object as sparely and barely as possible, and add to the idea of a poetry of things the artistic idea of economy. They hesitate to consider a personal poetry apart from things.

The main stream of poetry, however, in my opinion, moves in another direction. It moves through such poems as Tu 'Fu's 'On Trying to Pin My Hair Together with Old Fingers', and in modern times, through the personal poetry of Baudelaire, and Jiménez and Rilke, Vallejo, Neruda and Blas de Otero. Here the use of unconscious imagery is not intended to shock, but is merely an extension

of the personal. There is a poem supposed to have been written by Raftery, that Yeats liked so well:

I am Raftery the poet,
Full of hope and love.
My eyes without sight,
My mind without torment.

Going West
By the light of my heart,
Weary and sad
To the end of the road.

Behold me now
With my back to a wall,
Playing music
To empty pockets.

Mr. Merwin has a poem in which the last stanza begins:

I am a sullen unseemly man—
Pray now no more for folly—
Who in the bleak and tolling hour
Walk like a chime without a tower,
Rending a story, and complain
Heartless and foolishly.

This speaks in a personal way, but it is not convincing. There is no sense looking for true personal poetry in Merwin then; it doesn't exist. He is not used to talking about himself.

But the absence of this personal speech is related to the absence of the personal voice, and this in turn is related to the flatness of the language. I have never met Mr. Merwin, but I heard him once read 'Two Poems for Alfred Wallis' from *Green With Beasts*, and as he read them, they were tremendously effective. When I read them later on the paper, they were to my surprise very flat. My explanation of this is that he was bridging the gap between the written language in which the poems were actually composed, and the *ear* language necessary to move us with his own *voice*, but this bridge falls when the voice dies. The good

poem somehow must move from the page directly to the ear, and the more inward poem will.

There is a lack of inwardness then in Mr. Merwin's poetry. We have seen this lack before among people who use, much more exclusively, descriptive language, such as sociologists and scientists.

Mr. Merwin's most successful poems throughout his whole work are often short poems whose subject is exactly this lack of inwardness. In *Green with Beasts*, there is a poem describing a dreaming dog, with paws twitching, etc., chasing tigers in a strange field. The poet imagines himself also standing there.

> Strange even to yourself and loved, and only
> A sleeping beast knows who you are.

This seems to me very powerful.

In another fine poem, 'Low Fields and Light', he feels himself lost, mysteriously drawn to some flat fields near the sea. He sees them as in a vision:

> My father never plowed there . . .
> But you would think the fields were something
> To me, so long I stare out, looking
> For their shapes or shadows through the matted
> gloom, seeing
> Neither what is nor what was, but the flat light rising.

In a fine poem called 'After the Flood', he walks by the Hudson River after a flood. There is much description of flotsam, the swollen water, the altered shore, etc.—the mysterious changes that have taken place suggest the possibility of sudden loss. Once he has fulfilled the need for describing the swollen and cruel river, he turns to something else.

> I noticed
> Near the bottom of the park, just below
> The highwater line, an old coat hanging
> Snagged on a tree-branch, and caught myself wondering
> What sort of drunken creature had passed there.

This comes suddenly alive because it is a real poetic image, not a mere description. There is also an inwardness in it; the poet senses deep inside himself that he might become that same sort of drunken creature.

I am now trying to give examples of the poetry of the highest intensity, and this poetry continues into his as yet unpublished new book. These newer poems are to the astonishment of many about the coal mining section of Pennsylvania where Mr. Merwin was born. The superiority of these poems to those on Jason's Voyage is nearly infinite. The new poems exist in a real landscape and the people are real, not shadows out of books. One of the poems, called 'Small Woman on Swallow Street', was published in *The Paris Review* a year or two ago. It describes the sense of evil that seems to rise out of the hat brim of a Pennsylvania woman.

SMALL WOMAN ON SWALLOW STREET

Four feet up, under the bruise-blue
Fingered hat-felt, the eyes begin. The sly brim
Slips over the sky, strcet after street, and nobody
Knows, to stop it. It will cover
The whole world, if there is time. Fifty years'
Start in gray the eyes have; you will never
Catch up to where they are, too clever
And always walking, the legs not long but
The boots big with wide smiles of darkness
Going round and round at their tops, climbing.
They are almost to the knees already, where
There should have been ankles to stop them.
So must keep walking all the time, hurry, for
The black sea is down where the toes are
And swallows and swallows all. A big coat
Can help save you. But eyes push you down; never
Meet eyes. There are hands in hands, and love
Follows its furs into shut doors; who
Shall be killed first? Do not look up there:
The wind is blowing the building-tops, and a hand

Is sneaking the whole sky another way, but
It will not escape. Do not look up. God is
On High. He can see you. You will die.

The poem is a powerful glimpse. The evil in human nature is carefully related not to Adam and Eve, or to theological doctrines, or to something the Greeks might or might not have done, but to kindly members of sewing circles in little towns in Pennsylvania, members of the poet's family, white Protestants. Other fine poems, among those recently published in magazines, are 'Grandfather In The Old Men's Home', and 'The Drunk In The Furnace'.

It is obvious that in the later poems Merwin's poetic power, which is real, is coming up from underneath more and more powerfully. In the 'Small Woman on Swallow Street', the written language gives way at times to a spoken language. The written language that is left does not kill the poem, but does dilute and weaken it tremendously. As the poet grows in strength, the prose language may disappear entirely, or it may not.

Many other things could be said about Mr. Merwin's work. He has actually a wonderfully resonant imagination, which senses depth everywhere. My purpose, however, was merely to follow a single idea through his work—the idea of prose language appearing inside poems. The idea that a poet should adopt prose into a poem is characteristic of American life in the last years, in which everyone is somehow disguised as someone else. The reasonable mood and tone of most of Mr. Merwin's work also has as a model not the spiritual intensity of a great poet, but is rather modelled more on a figure out of the middle class, a serene and detached observer such as Gilbert White.

This must be the end of a short tour through Mr. Merwin's work. Behind his poetry, he presents the picture of a genuine, enduring, and graceful man, marred by a reluctance to be extreme. He lives on earth as though in a warm room, surrounded by a world of smiling objects, all of which he sleepily understands, as if he had known everything once and then forgotten it, like a great general born into the world again as a member of the animal kingdom.

—Crunk.

Denise Levertov

AN IGNORANT PERSON

Way out there where words jump
in the haze
is the land of hot mamas.

Or say, in the potato patch
a million bugs glittering green and bronze
climb up and down the stems
exchanging perceptions.

                    I in my balloon
light where the wind
permits a landing,
in my own province.

DENISE LEVERTOV

THE DOG OF ART

That dog with daisies for eyes
who flashes forth
flame of his very self at every bark
is the Dog of Art.
Worked in wool, his blind eyes
look inward to caverns and jewels
which they see perfectly,
and his voice
measures forth the treasure
in music sharp and loud,
sharp and bright,
bright flaming barks,
and growling smoky soft, the Dog
of Art turns to the world
the quietness of his eyes.

John Logan

NUDE KNEELING IN SAND

The girl in the sand
colored hat
of unfinished straw
with its sides of waves
of waters weaving
in the winds of her
yellow hair, her eyes
hives of bees, touch-
es her breasts toward her knees.

Like a child she digs
and buries
her thin hands in the
desirable flesh
colored sands, as small
animals or pairs
of birds that wait to
rise and stir scat-
tering streams of amber myrrh.

Out of ecstasy
her bright mouth
opens to the sun
as she lifts her self
to it and rests, with
breasts sweet and full, back
beautifully curved,
arms down, lap and
loin packed with moist, golden coin.

William Duffy

LOVE POEM

Sleeping alone again on my linen pillow, I dream
Of haunting journeys into antelope lands,
To dark dens lined with lacy ferns,
Green on grey stones, and vines in my arms.

Again the wild boar of the forest is in me,
In all the beds and grassy streams,
The long goodbyes, the kiss meetings, glances.

Sleeping alone now in the windy limbs of my linden trees
I see the cardinal's nest, red clover fields,
Governors, princes, islands of silver mines;

Still . . . no sound . . . but the bleaking grey birds;
You are in the mists of my orange mornings,
And when you pull my hand, I am the elk
Standing . . . sleeping . . . in your darkening forest.

William Duffy

THE HORSE IS LOOSE

Outside, below my window
The big bay horse is loose
Twisting the dry snow-grass in his yellow teeth.
It is trying to snow . . .
And his brown ears are waiting.

A king stands poised, waiting, in an old
Armenian hat, on a rusty ship
Two thousand miles from any
Atlas.

You talked to me last night of blueberries
And warm raisin drinks and songs . . .
Of hands of servants bathing someone
In the still inlets of the Mediterranean.

But below my window the ground is hard.
This patch of field has only Indian memories.
And I am waiting alone for that tiny sound
Which brings cold terror to hounds
And the sudden jerks in a sleeping man.

Benjamin Clemenson

RAIN

It is the sinking of things.

Flashlights drift over dark trees,
Girls kneel,
An owl's eyelids fall.

The sad bones of my hands descend into a valley
Of strange rocks.

Robert Bly

RESTLESS IN THE FALL AFTERNOON

I

I cannot wait for the night to come again,
And the huge stars to come—
All over the heavens! Bowls of cradles and black pools
And the blue to fade away.

II

You must be alone six hours before you look at the stars—
Then coming out into the dark heavens
You will be like a drunkard returning to his table.

III

There is a huge star that stands alone in the Western darkness:
Arcturus. When I read that the Arabs called it
The Keeper of Heaven, I felt a strange joy. I think
It was in the womb that I received
The thirst for the dark heavens.

FOUR WAR POEMS

In future issues we plan to print a group of short poems, of no more than four lines each, a group of love poems, and a group of poems to the moon. Poems may come from any country, and be written in any style.

RICHARD HUGO

From: MISSION TO LINZ

From Part 1

You can see the gunners smoking
On the morning stones,
The navigator tugging his harness,
The pilot who checks everything twice,
The good natured bombardier
Or co-pilot swearing.
They too could look at the sky
North, there where it ends
As if finite or breaks its northern orange,
And in that moment of no time know it:
Where they will be in hours
Of rotation and revolving iron
Before they can think of it,
Speak of it.

It must seem weird, incommunicable
The desire for ozone
Cold and the unremembered terrible.

You can know it.
It will come on you quickly.
But even if you can say it,
Once the engines have started nothing is heard.

2

Nothing is heard in the north
And the northern temperatures grow cold with the height.
There is the stark crack of voice
Taking oxygen checks and the sharp static answers.
You are beyond birds, a season called summer.
There are places away from the world where the air is
    always winter.
Nothing is heard in the north.

The engines pound out their particular fever
A sound that has a silence of its own.
There is the control of needles and gauges, green
And showing the speed, the degrees and the climb,
And the six boxes of six shudder and rock
Where the sun goes pale in the thinness of air
Above the Adriatic. Fifties are tested,
Checked in
The stark crack of six voices
And the seventh replying with a sharp static answer.
The engines pound out their particular fever
A sound that has a silence of its own.

No one can call this movement
Though Europe wavers and falls back to the south
And a needle says one-fifty-four. The air
In ten centuries of waiting. A flange
Is your breathing and the throat says nothing
Behind the tight mask, and the mask,
The silent engines are all your loss of self.

The sterile alps, blue in summer
Swing up, pass for an hour underneath,
Fall harshly into their brown valleys
And the grey one rail towns of vertical protection.

But what do you think
While Europe wavers and falls back to the south
In a way that is not called movement?
While the flange breathes for you
And the needles swing to other numbers?

Europe wavers and falls back to the south.
The silence rotates your life in the roar
And you think this:
That out of thirty-six we stand a chance
(Statistic) to lose three at the most.
Twenty minutes before the wide turn
You will say it over and over
Where the air is twenty centuries of tension
And the sun goes pale in the thinness of air
You will say it: three at the most.

But the engines pound out their particular fever.
A silence of its own.
There are places away from the world where the air
    is always winter.
Nothing is heard in the north.

George Kresenky

A DREAM OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The mole breaks the tree
Into dust, breaks the dust
Into earth, and the earth into compass and black doors.

Seas smashing the bastions
Rise up again in the Bergen harbor
Skirting the islands on water crowded with the floating dead.

Seymour Faust

IN PIPELINE

Listening to music
on the radio,
the 'Theme of the Fast Carriers'
I think of the sea

and the rocking of the troopship
to the trouble of thought.
I think of the sea birds
and the high wind

which has been my home.
Foolish talk
I talked, foolish pleasure
in sight of land

and high handed grace
of the strong sun
I took. Foolishly
I was excited

in the troop train north,
where finally
I took apart my rifle,
worked it over

and put it back together,
in rippling hills
living in the peace I had made
and dusty autumn.

CARENTAN O CARENTAN

Trees in the old days used to stand
And shape a shady lane
Where lovers wandered hand in hand
Who came from Carentan.

This was the shining green canal
Where we came two by two
Walking at combat-interval.
Such trees we never knew.

The day was early June, the ground
Was soft and bright with dew.
Far away the guns did sound,
But here the sky was blue.

The sky was blue, but there a smoke
Hung still above the sea
Where the ships together spoke
To towns we could not see.

Could you have seen us through a glass
You would have said a walk
Of farmers out to turn the grass,
Each with his own hay-fork.

The watchers in their leopard suits
Waited till it was time,
And aimed between the belt and boot
And let the barrel climb.

I must lie down at once, there is
A hammer at my knee.
And call it death or cowardice,
Don't count again on me.

Everything's alright, Mother,
Everyone gets the same
At one time or another.
It's all in the game.

I never strolled, nor ever shall,
Down such a leafy lane.
I never drank in a canal,
Nor ever shall again.

There is a whistling in the leaves
And it is not the wind,
The twigs are falling from the knives
That cut men to the ground.

Tell me, Master-Sergeant,
The way to turn and shoot.
But the Sergeant's silent
That taught me how to do it.

O Captain, show us quickly
Our place upon the map.
But the Captain's sickly
And taking a long nap.

Lieutenant, what's my duty,
My place in the platoon?
He too's a sleeping beauty,
Charmed by that strange tune.

Carentan O Carentan
Before we met with you
We never yet had lost a man
Or known what death could do.

BOOKS OF POETRY PUBLISHED IN 1959

The five most interesting books of poetry published last year seem to me to be *Rip-Rap* by Gary Snyder, published by Cid Corman in Japan, and available at City Lights or at Eighth Street Book Shop, 32 W. 8th Street, New York 11, at $1.25; *A Dream of Governors* by Louis Simpson, published by Wesleyan University Press at $1.65; Robert Creeley's *A Form of Women*, published by Eighth Street Book Shop and Jonathan Williams together at $1.50; W. D. Snodgrass's *Heart's Needle*, published by Knopf at $2.95; and James Wright's *Saint Judas*, published by Wesleyan, at $1.65.

Among the older poets, John Berryman and Robert Lowell both brought out good books in 1959—Berryman's *His Thought Made Pockets and The Plane Buckt*, published by Claude Fredericks, available at Eighth Street Book Shop for $2.50, and Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, Farrar, Straus, at $3.50. The latter book received the National Book Award.

Among poets still older, Pound brought out new cantos. His *Thrones*, at $3.50, was published by New Directions.

This is an impressive group of books for one year.

The first book of poems of Antonio Machado to appear in this country has been published in both Spanish and English by Gaetano Massa at Las Americas Press, 249 W. 13th Street, New York 11. Machado is translated by Willis Barnstone, and sells for $3.50. Mr. Massa deserves great gratitude for doing books of this kind. A sampling of the younger German poets appeared in *New Young German Poets*, translated by Jerome Rothenberg, published by City Lights at $1.00.

There was no good Rilke, Lorca, Jiménez, Alberti, Guillen, Hernandez, Baudelaire, Montale, Paz, or any of the South Americans. As usual, the translations of the Nobel Prize winners were horrible; the two translations of Pasternak's poetry were nonsense, and Mandelbaum's translations of Quasimodo, which Farrar, Straus published, were a ghastly travesty of the original.

Among the magazines, *The Quarterly Review of Literature* brought out a fine issue devoted to Hölderlin. The issue shows great editorial care and intelligence. It sells for $1.50 and may be ordered from T. Weiss, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

LOUIS SIMPSON'S NEW BOOK

OUR INTENTION IS NOT ONLY TO PUBLISH ESSAYS on the work of some of the poets of the 'fifties and 'sixties, one essay in each issue, as we have already done with Louis Simpson, Robert Creeley, Donald Hall, and W. S. Merwin, but also to comment on the later work of these poets as it appears.

Mr. Simpson's new book, *A Dream of Governors,* is divided into five sections, one of which contains war poems. The longest of these is a narrative poem called 'The Runner'. 'The Runner' gives the impression of an experience of great depth, brought up into very awkward poetry. The effect is of an unfinished work. The poetic line is modelled roughly on the Shakespearean or Wordsworthian five-beat line. Such a line does not fit the experience with which the poem is concerned.

The iambic line is often said to be a valid line for poetry in English. This is true. Mr. Simpson has rejected, however, the usual content associated with that line—the hoary castles, the girls, the wan faces are after all valid content! Rejecting these, he has substituted his own original content—but strangely enough, he retains the old line. As a result 'The Runner' seems only half-conceived.

Despite its awkwardness, the writing in this poem has great power. Judson Jerome, in a review in the *Antioch Review*, suggested that we are never far from hallucination in Mr. Simpson's poems—and it is true that his descriptions often have a hallucinatory power. I will quote a passage from 'The Runner' which will perhaps show both its strength and its weaknesses. An American infantry company is on the front near Bastogne in 1944. It is winter. The Americans are retreating. There have been rumors all night that the company is being left to face the Germans alone. Suddenly near dawn, the German tanks appear.

At the foot of the slope
The trees were shaking, parting. There emerged
A cannon barrel with a muzzle-brake.
It slid out like a snake's head, slowly swinging.
It paused. A flash of light came from its head
. . . The tank was growing large.
The cannon flashed. Machinegun tracers curved
Toward it, and played sparkling on the steel.
Still it came on, glittering in return
From its machineguns. Then, a crashing flame
Struck it, leaving a trail of smoke in air.
The tank shuddered. It slewed broadside around.
Inside the plates, as on an anvil, hammers
Were laboring. It trembled with explosions,
And smoke poured out of it. The slope was still,
Sprawling with hooded figures—and the rest
Gone back into the trees. Then there began
The sound of the wounded.

The writing is very strong, but its power is in the decision of the visual imagination, not in the rhythm or diction. It is as if one were sitting in a sun-lit room with clouded window-panes. The strength comes from the sun, but the light is dimmed. The rhythm reminding one of Wordsworth clouds the pane, and the diction, which is neither unusual nor inadequate, but more or less what one would expect, also dims the light. The poet is describing new experiences and inner sensations, for which there is no extensive precedent in English poetry, with a rhythm and diction developed in another century for totally different moods and events. Because the poem is divided against itself, a prosiness comes in. This division is a profound problem in American poetry: we have many new experiences and no real way to write about them. The older poetry of the sonnet, of the Prelude, is of very little help.

Embarking on a poem with such an intractable subject matter, a poet might decide not to do it at all—or to wait twenty years hoping he will have an appropriate line by then. Mr. Simpson chose to write it now, using whatever form seemed to him most appropriate. The poem fails, but this failure is worth many successes.

In Mr. Simpson's work generally one is surprised by the appearance of unpleasant public realities such as the Second

World War, or the gas chambers, for instance. This is one reason I think so highly of *A Dream of Governors*; there is a great reluctance among poets recently to bring such subjects in poetry. Writers such as James Merrill, for example, would never think of it; his idea of poetry does not include long wars. The war or its concentration camps do not break the composure of W. D. Snodgrass's book, nor Robert Creeley's—and no sane man demands that they must. Still, to be able to hold in the mind these ghastly facts and poetry at the same time is a great achievement. I do not know another American writer who has attempted a serious poem on the Nazis, yet the Nazis are as clearly a part of our world as the old Italian campaigns were of Hemingway's, or the subways and bridges of Crane's.

In the fine poem called 'The Bird', a Nazi kills Jews mournfully to the tune of his favorite song, 'I wish I were a little bird'. When the Russians liberate the camp, the Nazi is nowhere to be found. He has evidently turned into a bird, for the Russian colonel, writing his report, sees a small bird singing outside in a tree. I am very interested in these strange shifts of reality. In another poem, an American soldier dreams he is in Paris during the first World War. Looking up, he sees two old bi-planes fighting, and realizes he is a French soldier, and that some long-dead French soldier fought through the second World War in his uniform. Mr. Simpson's poetry at times is like a man who sits in a livingroom quietly talking, and gradually smoke begins to come out of his ears, and to gather over his head. This sudden shift from one kind of reality to another seems to me one of the major qualities of his poems.

I am also interested in the poetry about America. 'America is old'. 'We were the first to enter on the modern age.' 'America begins antiquity.' Mr. Simpson treats America somewhat as the Russian writers treat Russia—they talk about their country, and give what ideas they have. Mr. Simpson offers the metaphor of 'Pure space' for America—where there is nothing but an infinite freedom to look. Lacking any monuments of grief or suffering, the land remains wild or inhuman.

The country that Columbus thought he found
Is called America. It looks unreal.

But man came:

And murdering, in a religious way,
Brought Jesus to the Gulf of Mexico.

His poetry is in one sense the opposite of the poetry of Jiménez, who wanted his poems to be 'all present and no history'. Mr. Simpson insists that the past be somehow in the poem.

The first poem in *A Dream of Governors* is a short history of the West from pastoral Greece to the present. The recent growth of the secular powers, such as America, greeted with such cries of joy from Hillyer, Ciardi, and the other poets of the Uplift, is described in this way:

Old Aristotle, having seen this pass,
From where he studied in the giant's cave,
Went in and shut his book and locked the brass,
And lay down with a shudder in the grave.

The reviews of the book were strange. In the *Saturday Review*, Winfield Townley Scott has an incredibly stupid review of *A Dream of Governors* in which he dismisses it as light verse. On the contrary, Louis Simpson's poetry, unlike the optimistic verse of the 'forties, has a darkness and a suffering, without any schemes to avoid them.

In the first article on Mr. Simpson's work, in *The Fifties* # 1, I criticized Mr. Simpson for disharmony between form and content. He sometimes gives the effect of being simply lazy, and choosing any form that will do, just as people going to the Front commandeer any old car. At other times, he gives the effect of tremendous vigor and strength, pushing a subject to its limits. In his tragic feeling he is alone in his generation.

—Crunk.

AWARD

The Order of the Blue Toad is herewith conferred upon Jacques Barzun, for his middle-class hatred of art and poetry disguised as a defence of intellect.

The thesis of his new book, *The House of Intellect*, is that the decline of the intellect is due to the combined influences of art, science, and philanthropy. No one seems to question this fantastic theory. All he has actually done is to describe American sloppiness and laziness, even true of house-painting in this country, and then to attribute these to the ghoulish efforts of, for instance, painting and poetry.

Mr. Barzun, W. H. Auden, and Lionel Trilling are the entrepreneurs of a new book club, The Mid-Century Book Society. The spectacle of these three men defending all that is great in the culture of the past against vulgarization, and at the same time complacently reaping profits from a large book club for the middle class is really funny. O Swift, where art thou? Their triune picture, resembling Hear No Evil, See No Evil, and Think No Evil, is a low point in the use of cultural position for making money. At the same time as Mr. Barzun allows the advertising men to parade him before the masses like a sort of half-witted fighting cock, he comes to us as a defender of culture against the insidious betrayals of art and science! How ridiculous.

We therefore award him **The Blue Toad.** The Toad is drawn leaping up on a field of dollar signs and wilting diplomas. Inscribed around the emblem is the motto: *The House of Intellect, or, It Takes A Heap O' Thinking to Make a House a Home.*

JULIO CORTAZAR

From STORIES OF CRONOPIOS AND FAMAS

JULIO CORTAZAR is an Argentine writer who left Peron's Argentina and is now living in Paris. It might be useful to preface this selection from the STORIES OF CRONOPIOS AND FAMAS by discussing a few definitions. FAMA means fame or reputation. The famas are the important ones. The ESPERANZAS are really the great and grasping and envious middle-class-minded middle class. CRONOPIO is a constructed word, presumably from the Latin *cronos* and *opus*, time and work. The cronopio is both the work of time and the worker of time, the muddler, the artist, the laborer, the underdog, the humble, the insouciant. Exasperating, lovable and morally superior, he shall inherit the earth. The cronopios are alternately the grease and the monkey wrenches in the fly wheel of progress, depending on their mood that morning.

TRAVEL

WHEN FAMAS GO ON A TRIP, when they pass the night in a city, their procedure is the following: one fama goes to the hotel and prudently checks the prices, the quality of the sheets and the color of the carpets. The second repairs to the commissariat of police and there fills out a record of the real and transferable property of all three of them, as well as an inventory of the contents of their valises. The third fama goes to the hospital and copies the lists of the doctors on emergency and their specialities.

After attending to these affairs diligently, the travellers join each other in the central square of the city, exchange observations, and go into a cafe to take an aperitif. But before they drink, they join hands and do a dance in a circle. This dance is known as 'The Gaiety of the Famas'.

When cronopios go on a trip, they find that all the hotels are filled up, the trains have already left, it is raining buckets

and taxis don't want to pick them up, either that or they charge them exorbitant prices. The cronopios are not disheartened because they believe firmly that these things happen to everyone. When they manage, finally, to find a bed, and are ready to go to sleep, they say to one another: 'What a beautiful city, what a very beautiful city!' And all night long, they dream that huge parties are being given in the city and that they are invited. The next day they arise very contented, and that's how cronopios travel.

Esperanzas are sedentary. They forego travelling for things and people. They're like statues one has to go visit. They never take the trouble.

THE SONG OF THE CRONOPIOS

WHEN THE CRONOPIOS SING their favorite songs, they get so excited, and in such a way, that with frequency they get run over by trucks and cyclists, fall out of windows and lose what they're carrying in their pockets, even losing track of what day it is.

When a cronopio sings, the esperanzas and famas gather around to hear him, although they do not understand his ecstasy very well and in general show themselves somewhat scandalized. In the center of a ring of spectators, the cronopio raises his little arms as though he were holding up the sun, as if the sky were a tray and the sun the head of John the Baptist, in such a way that the cronopio's song is Salome stripped, dancing for the famas and esperanzas who stand there agape asking themselves if the good father would, if decorum. But because they are good at heart (the famas are good and the esperanzas are blockheads), they end by applauding the cronopio who recovers, somewhat startled, looks around, and also starts to applaud, poor fellow.

Translation and introductory note by Paul Blackburn.

A NOTE ON MISS IRITA VAN DOREN

IN AN EFFORT to find out who was responsible for the consistent insipidity of the *New York Times Book Review,* one of the editors of this magazine conducted an interview with Mr. Francis Brown, the head of the *Book Review.* The interview was published in the first issue of *The Fifties.*

It is strange that elsewhere—in France and Spain, for example—book reviews in the leading newspapers contribute to the intellectual life of the country, whereas *here* the *New York Times Book Review* and the *New York Herald Tribune Book Section* lay down vast mists, praising virtually everything; they surround the whole world of books with a neutrality like a fog.

There was an incident not long ago which shed more light on how so many boring reviews get written and published in America. A young poet who is widely published was asked by Miss Irita Van Doren, head of the *New York Herald Tribune Book Section,* to review Babette Deutsch's new book of poems, *Coming of Age* (Indiana, 1959). Miss Deutsch is a teacher at Columbia, and generally very well thought of. The poet wrote a review in which he gave his opinion that the poetry was *not* good. He cited examples and offered reasons. No one who seriously examines Miss Deutsch's book could deny that the reviewer's verdict represented at the very least a possible, honest judgment of the poems.

After some hemming and hawing Miss Van Doren made a long distance call to the poet, saying that she was not going to print his review but would send the payment for it. She said further that 'they were going to send the book out again'. Miss Van Doren evidently had reason to believe that Miss Moore liked Miss Deutsch's poetry: a review dull and full of fulsome praise by Marianne Moore duly appeared in the July 15, 1959, issue of the *New York Herald Tribune Book Section.*

The details are interesting. In this method of editing, the Editor simply sends out a book again and again until it gets the favorable review she wants! Behind such chicanery lies the typical American fear of harsh criticism, as well as a certain lack of intellectual honor. *The New York Herald Tribune* is not alone in such editing. This is a sure way to kill the country's intellectual life.

A QUOTATION FROM TOLSTOY

Some readers feel we are too extreme, and that writers should be more respectful, etc. If you think we are extreme, you should read *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, by Tolstoy. We have copied an excerpt below.

'The third means is what I cannot call by any other name than the hypnotization of the people. This means consists in retarding the spiritual development of men and maintaining them with all kinds of suggestions in a concept of life which humanity has already outlived, and on which the power of the governments is based. This hypnotization is at the present time organized in the most complex manner, and beginning its action in childhood, continues over men to their death. This hypnotization begins at early youth in compulsory schools which are established for the purpose, and in which the children are instilled with world-conceptions which were peculiar to their ancestors and are directly opposed to the modern consciousness of humanity. In countries in which there is a state religion, the children are taught the senseless blasphemies of ecclesiastical catechisms, in which the necessity of obeying the powers is pointed out; in republican governments they are taught the savage superstition of patriotism, and the same imaginary obligation of obeying the authorities.'

From The Kingdom of God is Within You,
Boston, Page, 1951, *Chapter* 8.

IDEAS BY WHICH WE LIVE

THE PROTESTANT CHURCH, one of the most powerful forces in the United States, every day bends more and more to business and to flattery of the people. Like the three other principal religions of America—Catholicism, Suburban Atheism, and Universitarianism—it helps very little in any spiritual life. In this issue we have set down what we gather to be some of main intellectual tenets of various Protestant churches in recent years. As Eisenhower says, 'America is in strong moral condition!'

THE AMERICAN PROTESTANT'S HANDBOOK

'Families who pray together stay together.'
Advertisement in the New York subways, 1959.

'Christianity is Good Business!'
A church sign in Iowa City, 1955.

'Christ was a businessman, too: he advertised the Word.'
A minister in Hartford, Conn.

'It isn't necessary to drive the money-changers from the temple—what counts is the ability to get along with others.'
Dozens of sermons.

'We should all be like Jesus and obey our fathers and mothers.'
A Presbyterian Sunday School brochure.

'The Catholic Church is trying to take the vote away from everybody, and besides, nobody can read in South America.'
A middlewestern Lutheran minister during an appeal for Protestant missionary funds.

'All that is necessary is to RETURN TO CHRIST!'*
* How to do that? You figure that out for yourself! No one else knows!

And yet they always cry out: Here is the true Church, here is Christ, flock all hither!
—JACOB BOEHME.

CONTRIBUTORS

Enrique González Martínez is one of the finest poets of Mexico in this century. He made his living, among other ways, as a doctor, and as a diplomatic representative of Mexico. He published a number of books, including *The Death of the Swan*, from which his poem here is taken.

John Logan is just starting a new poetry magazine called *Choice*, better known as 'Logan's Choice'. Poems should be sent to Box 13, Notre Dame, Indiana. He went on a reading tour this winter, reading at the Poetry Center in New York, at NYU, and other places, and gave the first reading at St. Vincent's since William Jennings Bryan.

Richard Hugo works for Boeing Aircraft. He was in the Airforce during the war, making flights over Germany. The stanzas published here are taken from a much longer poem. He lives now in Seattle.

Louis Simpson was an infantryman whose unit suffered their first heavy losses at Carentan, in Normandy, during the first days of the invasion of France, in 1944. The poem here is an account of that action. With his company, part of the 101st Airborne Division, he later moved on, ending at Bergtesgaden.

Seymour Faust lives in New York. His first book of poems was recently published by Hawk's Well Press. The title of his poem 'Pipeline' is a metaphor. The word describes what was thought of as a predesignated series of stations and assignments leading to a permanent station assignment, often in the Far East.

Benjamin Clemenson was born in Caldwell, New Jersey. He took a law degree, and is currently running for sheriff of Erie County, New York.

Willis Barnstone teaches at Wesleyan University in the Spanish Department. With his wife, who is Greek, he recently published a translation of the Greek novel *The Other Alexander*, by Margarita Liberaki. It is published by Noonday.

George Kresenky lives on the eastern shore of Lake Erie. He graduated last year from Antioch College.

Paul Blackburn has a book of translations of Provencal poets coming out with Macmillan soon. Some of his own poems may be seen in the new Grove Press anthology.

J. A. Cottonwood lives in Salisbury, North Carolina. This is his first published translation.

Denise Levertov's fourth book, *With Eyes at the Back of Our Heads*, is available from New Directions for $3.50. Her poem 'February Evening in New York' was published in our last issue.

The Longview Foundation announces that it has awarded a grant of $300.00 to Robert Bly for his contributions to *The Fifties* # 1 and # 2.

IN FUTURE ISSUES . . .

The Sixties #5 will be a French issue, with fifty pages of French poetry in the original and in translation. Poems by Gautier, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Verlaine, La Forgue and Valéry will be published, all translated by various American poets and translators especially for that issue. Of Twentieth Century French poets, Paul Eluard and René Char have been chosen, and from poets since World War II, the fine poet Yves Bonnefoy. *The Sixties #5* will be 75c.

The Sixties announces the establishment of a small press for the publication of European, South American, and American poetry. We intend to publish five books a year. The five books for 1960 are:

Forty Poems by the Nobel Prize poet Juan Ramon Jiménez, selected and translated by Carlos de Francisco Zea.

Twenty Poems of Georg Trakl, translated by James Wright and Robert Bly.

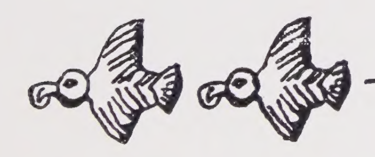
Twenty Poems of Caesar Vallejo, of Peru, translated by various American poets.

Twenty Poems of Pablo Neruda, of Chile, translated by various American poets.

The Continent Rising From the Sea, an anthology of the younger generation of American poets.

All volumes will be from fifty to one hundred pages, on good paper and in letterpress, printed in Ireland. Volumes of translations will include the original language on facing pages. Each book will sell for $1.00, and all five may be ordered for $5.00.

Order from: *THE SIXTIES PRESS*, Odin House, Madison, Minnesota. Readers may also write to us for *A Broadsheet Against the New York Times Book Review* (25c).



WISDOM OF THE OLD

'*Meaning* and *structure*—how are they related? . . . We may say that a poem is a structure of meanings. . . . But . . . the poem is not only a structure of meanings. It is a structure *with* meaning —a new meaning not to be equated with any or all of the meanings that went into the structure. . . . So we have the *structure of meanings* and the *meaning of structure*. . . . We may say that a poem is a *structure of experience* which can give us the *experience of a structure*.'

Robert Penn Warren, in
Newsweek.

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